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July 20, 2004

Carolyn Bleck
Examiner, Art Unit 3626
US Patent and Trademark Offices
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450

Re: Application/control Number: 10/054,504

Dear Ms. Bleck,

As per your last email communication, I am writing this formal letter to request information related to delays surrounding a patent I filed in January 2002.

You indicated in your first response to me (page 3 of the email document I have included) that "I would estimate that it will be at least 2 years until the case is worked on. To expedite the process, I would suggest filing a petition to make special."

I would appreciate the following from you:
1. Clarification of what petition I can file and what it means 'to make special.' The exact name and, if possible, web URL would be especially helpful.
2. Reassurance that my patent application has not be given lower priority because I do not have a patent lawyer working for me. Although I may be naïve, it seems somewhat untenable to me that large, high-tech businesses (e.g., Intel®, Dell®, Microsoft®) are bringing to market inventions that are four years old, due to long delays in the US patent office; thus I hope you can see the source of my concern about discrimination against patent applicants who do not-hire lawyers (e.g., in the form of delays such as this one) which seems to impose a significant competitive disadvantage. I am sure that I am not the first to worry about this and thus expect that there are statistics available with the mean/median time (with standard deviations or percentile distributions if the spread is non-Gaussian) until a patent is examined based upon the characteristics of the applicant. Indeed, if such information is not readily available or routinely collected and analyzed, I am sure my elected representatives would be most concerned and I will make it a priority to draw their attention to such potential discrimination.

Thank you,

Ralph Leonard, MD, MPH